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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses job opportunities for women art educators interested in working with exceptional children. Within the next few years there will be a significant increase in the demand for art teachers trained in the uses of art with exceptional children. This is due to the increased sophistication of schools in identifying exceptional children, the current trend to mainstream exceptional children, and laws mandating the right to a free public education for all children. Several forces, however, may limit the demand for art teachers of exceptional children. Foremost among these forces are art therapists who are trying to replace art education with art therapy. They are expanding their training programs and working for legislation which will ensure that new job descriptions be written to require the services of registered art therapists rather than art educators, artists, or occupational therapists. Action must be taken to prevent them from succeeding. The best preparation for those interested in using art with exceptional children would be a bachelor's degree or master's degree which provides courses in art education, art therapy, fine arts, and exceptional education, along with supervised experience in working with exceptional children. Programs which train art educators to work with exceptional children must have a fair share of women teachers and women students. (Author/RM)

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# ART FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL CHILD: JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

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A discussion of job opportunities for women art educators interested in working with exceptional children must include consideration of:

1. The forces which are expanding job opportunities for art education.
2. The forces which are limiting art education from entering this job market.
3. The various job classifications.
4. Educational criteria for these job classifications, and
5. The "nitty-gritty" of salary, advancement and discrimination in these job classifications.

The opportunities for art educators to work with exceptional children are expanding rapidly for several reasons. Increased sophistication in schools in identifying exceptional children and the current trend to mainstream exceptional children (i.e., place exceptional children in regular classrooms) means that many more public school art teachers will have exceptional children in their art classes. Most significant, however, is that today many courts and state legislatures are mandating the right to a free public education for, and suitable to the needs of all children.[1] Hundreds of thousands of children with mental, physical, learning, emotional and multiple handicaps are going to public school for the first time. One out of ten, or seven million, school-aged children are handicapped.[2] And this high percentage does not include the more than

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four million academically or artistically gifted children[3] or those disadvantaged by social or economic problems. While, as of 1974, fewer than forty percent of these children were enrolled in public or special schools, this is changing.[4] Parents all over the United States are demanding and getting equal, appropriate, and the least restrictive possible education for their exceptional children. The result is a sudden increase in the number of public school and public agency programs for exceptional children. Correspondingly, this increases the demand for specially trained teachers. With the current increased recognition of the therapeutic and educational value of art activities for exceptional children, we should soon see a demand for art educators specially trained to work with these children.

There are several forces, however, which may limit this demand for art teachers of exceptional children. Our traditional emphasis in art education is usually on group programs. We lack the individual diagnostic and prescriptive teaching methods needed to adequately meet the exceptional child's educational needs. Furthermore, while we art educators are still trying to explain and justify the value of art education for the exceptional child, art therapists are busily enhancing the sophistication of their therapeutic techniques. They are expanding graduate training programs (the number of programs offering a master's degree in art therapy has doubled in the past year)[5] and working for legislation which will ensure that new job descriptions be written to require registered art therapists rather than art educators, artists, or occupational therapists. Add this to the present lure of the clinical "psychotherapeutic" approach, and we may soon see art therapy replace art education in the educational programs serving exceptional children. To prevent this: art educators must develop undergraduate and graduate

teacher training programs that specialize in art education for exceptional children; we must support and engage in research on the methodology of art education for exceptional children; and we must publicize the value of art experiences for the cognitive and aesthetic growth of exceptional children, as well as for the therapeutic value. But we must act now, before the situation crystallizes. We need to insure through legislative action that art education for exceptional children is not limited to or replaced by art therapy. At present, art is used with exceptional children in many settings by individuals with a wide variety of educational backgrounds and job titles. Table 1 provides a description of these settings using the "Cascade" model for special education delivery introduced by Maynard Reynolds in 1962, and recently adopted by the Council for Exceptional Children. Table 2 shows the various personnel using art with exceptional children in these settings. (See pages 4 and 5.)

Within the public school system, the regular art teacher is usually responsible for teaching art to handicapped children who are mainstreaming, to children in special classes, and to the academically and artistically gifted children. On occasion the children in the special class will be too problematic, or the art teacher unprepared to teach exceptional children, and the special class teacher will teach the art. In the special day school and residential school settings, the art teacher will have been specially trained to work with exceptional children, either by education or by previous experience. Often this person has been trained and functions as an art therapist rather than an educator. Not all day and residential schools have a separate staff position for art; many incorporate art activities into other classroom activities taught by the special teacher, or into an occupational therapist's program. Hospital schools and residential hospitals will rarely have an art teacher on staff. In these settings the art

activities may be initiated and supervised by art therapists, occupational therapists, paraprofessional occupational therapy aides, psychiatric nurses, mental health technicians, lay volunteers. On occasion, for diagnostic or therapeutic reasons psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers may use art activities also. Frequently, the person who runs the art program has not been specially trained either in art education or in art for exceptional children, but has an interest in the area and was available within the institution or school setting to start a program. Art is also for diagnostic and therapeutic reasons by art therapists and other staff in child guidance clinics and by teachers in head start programs.

Because of the variety of personnel using art with exceptional children, the educational backgrounds can range from an M. D. in psychiatry or Ph. D. in clinical psychology, to a high school diploma with a proven sensitivity to exceptional children. Probably the best preparation for those interested in using art with exceptional children would be a bachelor's degree and/or master's degree which provides courses in art education, art therapy, fine arts, and exceptional education, along with supervised experience in working with exceptional children.

Admission requirements and ease of access for women into any of these jobs or the educational programs which prepare people for these jobs should be no different than for men. This is not true, however, for medical and clinical psychology graduate schools where discrimination based on sex or unwritten quotas for women still appear to exist. In some facilities for exceptional children the administrator's own qualifications and discipline may affect the experiential background required for the job. While no figures could be found on the proportional number of men and women in each of these job classifications, it is expected that the pattern would be

very similar to that of other educational and therapeutic facilities, i.e., more women than men in lower and middle level staff positions, many more men that women in supervisory or administrative positions.[7] It is probable that similar patterns also occur in the salary distribution, where women through lower job levels or discrimination earn less than men of equal background. However, a thorough library search and a telephone survey of public agencies, schools and institutions in Ohio[8] failed to obtain any information on the salary status of women and men. Of the ten different facilities contacted, only two would reveal salary ranges of those using art with exceptional children and neither would specify salaries by sex. In general, salary depends on educational background, years of experience and job category. For example: art teacher and activity therapist salaries will start around $8,000; art therapists around $12,000; and administrators and therapists in private practice can earn well over $25,000.

In summary, within the next few years we should see a large increase in the need for art teachers trained in the uses of art with exceptional children. What does this mean in terms of job opportunities for women? In the final analysis, discrimination against women art educators is part of a larger pattern of discrimination against women in our culture. As the women's movement forces change elsewhere, it is important for us to hop on the bandwagon and insure our share of increased opportunity. Programs training art educators to work with exceptional children must have a fair share of women teachers, and women students. Also, a fair share of women in administrative positions is needed to serve as role models for those women just entering art education.

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